



**UNITED METHODIST COMMITTEE ON RELIEF**

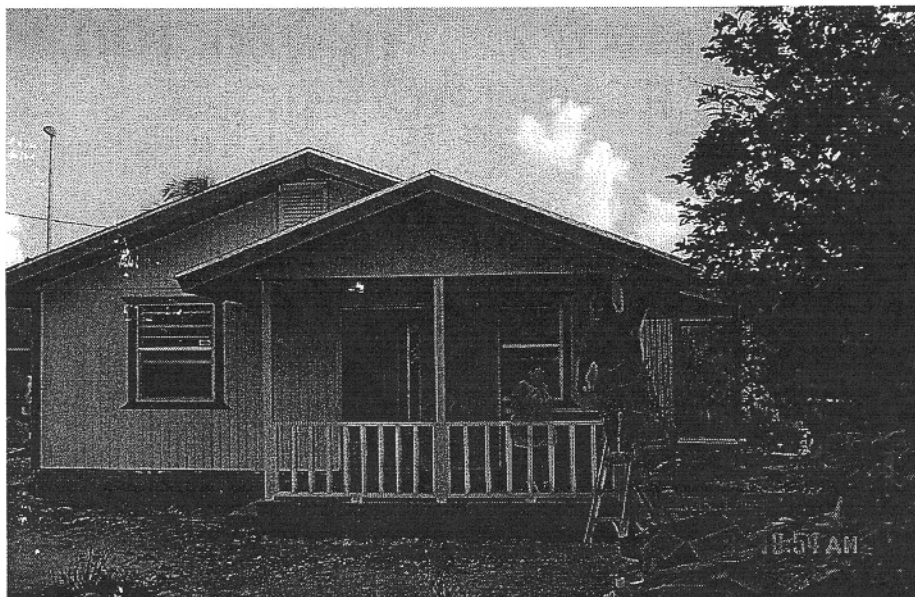
**UMCOR**

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# **HOUSING RECONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR PROGRAM**

## **THE BAHAMAS**

October 1, 2000 to September 30, 2001



**The United Methodist Committee on Relief**

**FINAL REPORT**

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## **I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Introduction:**

When Hurricane Floyd left a path of destruction throughout many of Bahamas' outer, or family islands, in October 1999, the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) immediately responded to the needs of the vulnerable communities, through its local United Methodist Churches, the Bahamian Conference of the Methodist Church (BCMC) and the Methodist Church of the Caribbean and the Americas (MCCA). UMCOR supplied immediate funding to these partners for hurricane relief items to be distributed to the victims of the disaster. In the months following, UMCOR began to fund reconstruction and repair efforts of the churches out of private donations. The BCMC and MCCA matched this funding with volunteer labor from United Methodist Volunteer in Mission (UMVIM) teams. This labor and funding was used to reconstruct several severely damaged houses.

In response to the pressing need for housing repair, and reconstruction, in the aftermath of Hurricane Floyd, UMCOR was approached by USAID to put together a proposal to expand its reconstruction efforts with the use of volunteer labor. After an initial assessment and proposal submission by UMCOR, UMCOR was awarded an Eight Hundred Thousand (\$800,000) cooperative agreement to do housing reconstruction and repair over a 12 month (October 1, 2000-September 30, 2001) period on Cat and Abaco Islands.

The reconstruction and repair work that was completed was done in a collaborative effort with the assistance of local partners. The BCMC provided logistical support to UMCOR and assisted in sponsoring and hosting many of the 50 volunteer teams who contributed their labor to the project. The Disaster Preparedness Committee of the Government of the Bahamas (GOB) provided some materials for the reconstruction and repair efforts, and also helped UMCOR ensure that housing codes were met in the reconstruction efforts.

In total, 17 homes (12 on Abaco Island; 5 on Cat Island) were completely reconstructed, 9 homes (6 on Abaco Island; 3 on Cat Island) received major repair work, and 4 homes (all on Abaco Island) were partially reconstructed. Beneficiaries were selected by an on-island housing committee and final approval for beneficiaries was given by the Disaster Preparedness Committee in Nassau. The hallmark of using volunteer (UMVIM) teams for the labor force of this project was challenging and unique, as described in more detail below.

**Objectives of the Project:**

The Housing Reconstruction and Repair project in the Bahamas had the following Objectives:

1. Reconstruct up to 30 houses on Abaco (25 houses) and Cat (5 houses) Islands for selected beneficiaries whose homes sustained irreparable damage by Hurricane Floyd and who lacked sufficient resources to reconstruct the homes themselves.
2. Conduct Major Repairs on 30 houses on Abaco (25 houses) and Cat (5 houses) Islands to those selected beneficiaries whose homes suffered severe, but repairable, damage by Hurricane Floyd.

**Summary of Activities:**

After setting up its office and establishing a presence in the Bahamas, the first step of UMCOR's project implementation was the selection of beneficiaries. In all cases, UMCOR gave preference to vulnerable populations (the elderly or single-head of household) who were uninsured and lacked the financial and labor resources to complete the work themselves. On both Cat and Abaco Islands, UMCOR put together a "Site/Recipient Selection" committee to facilitate and determine those individuals and families most in need of houses according to the above- mentioned criteria.

Committee membership consisted of the following: the on- island Administrator, a representative from the particular island community, a member of The Bahamas Conference of the Methodist Church (BCMC), a member of the Disaster Preparedness Center of the Bahamian Government, and UMCOR's on-island coordinator and project manager. These respective teams met monthly to choose the locations of housing, and the recipient base.

The first construction activities began on Cat Island in January 2001 with the arrival of the first of 50 volunteer teams. Volunteer teams continued to come to both islands over an 8-month period, with over 500 individual volunteers in all contributing their labor. These UMCOR (United Methodist Volunteers in Mission) teams, were a great practical boost to our construction efforts, and they also touched the hearts of the communities in which they worked.

UMCOR provided continual management and monitoring of the pace of work, the quantity of work, the costs of work, and the quality of work completed under this project. Frequent visits were made by project management staff to ensure timely completion of the work. In addition, by following Government of Bahaman' s standards for hurricane disaster reconstruction, developed in

2001, UMCOR ensured that its construction was completed according to accepted code. A final inspection was completed on all reconstructed houses, certifying that they were built to code.

In collaboration with contractors and casual laborers, UMCOR completed the reconstruction of 17 homes (12 on Abaco Island; 5 on Cat Island) and major repairs to another 9 houses (6 on Abaco Island; 3 on Cat Island). In addition, the partial reconstruction of 5 additional homes was undertaken on Abaco Island. The total number of houses undergoing construction work was less than originally anticipated. This was mostly due to the fact that total reconstruction costs were actually much higher than originally projected since no organizations, including the Government of Bahamas, were undertaking hurricane reconstruction work at the time the proposal was written. More detail on this is provided below.

**Conclusions:**

Through this project, UMCOR successfully met the goals of providing quality reconstruction and major repairs to the most vulnerable populations who suffered from the affects of Hurricane Floyd. Although more costly then originally anticipated, the reconstruction efforts in the Bahamas were still completed in a cost efficient manner, as compared to the cost of reconstruction borne by the Government of Bahamas, and was done in a spirit which promoted volunteerism and community cooperation. In addition, successful cooperation between local partners was accomplished, as UMCOR contributed to building the capacity of local organizations, the Methodist churches, and the Government of the Bahamas, to undertake relief and reconstruction efforts.

**II. PROJECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS & DEVIATIONS IN REACHING PLANNED TARGETS**

As an international non-governmental organization, UMCOR's presence in the Bahamas was a new one. Therefore, the first few months of the project were spent establishing this presence, and putting into place a solid framework for partnership with the main project partners. UMCOR used this time to better define the roles of the other actors, the GOB's Disaster Preparedness Committee and the BCMC, to hire personnel, and to set up banking accounts and other operating procedures.

To ensure fair and appropriate beneficiary selection, UMCOR/Bahamas put into place a "Recipient/Site Selection Committee" on both Cat and Abaco Islands. These committees met

several times in the early stages of the project, in order to choose the beneficiaries, and to determine the type of construction work needed. In all cases, UMCOR gave selection preference to vulnerable populations (the elderly or single-head of household) who were uninsured and lacked the financial and human resources to complete the work themselves.

Simultaneous to beneficiary selection, UMCOR researched the best means for the procurement of housing materials required for reconstruction. Procurement activities were one of the main aspects of this project. After receiving bids from several Bahamian and American sources, it was determined that the most cost efficient method for bulk procurement, was to procure through local and on-island (in the case of Abaco) sources. Not only did UMCOR negotiate regular discounts on materials (up to 20%); shipping costs were also reduced through local procurement.

UMCOR's cost share as part of this project amounted to \$762,900. This amount included the working contribution of the UMVIM teams.

The original proposal purported to build up to 30 new houses, and to reconstruct up to 30 others. We were able to build 22 (5 partially reconstructed) new houses total, and repair 9 others. The reasons for the reduced number of builds had to do with the following matters: The overall costs for construction work in the Bahamas proved higher than originally anticipated, and the contribution from our other partners in this project, though highly appreciated, proved to be less cost reducing than was originally anticipated. The five houses that were partially reconstructed were handed over to the Government of the Bahamas who will be completing all the remaining work on those houses.

The reasons for the increase in construction costs over what was budgeted are various. First, the construction costs that were budgeted in the proposal were based on estimates provided by the BCMC. At the time those estimates were calculated, the Government of the Bahamas had not yet released its disaster reconstruction housing codes, and had not begun any reconstruction work themselves. Once those codes were printed, UMCOR had to follow those codes. Thus, the numbers proposed by UMCOR were based on estimates and not actual costs. In addition, the number of houses UMCOR planned to reconstruct according to the proposal, was based on the assumption that all houses reconstructed would be one bedroom houses. In fact, many of the homes actually recommended for reconstruction required two and three bedroom homes due to family size.

Another reason for the greater costs of reconstruction than what was originally anticipated was that as a result of being unable to find highly qualified volunteer teams, UMCOR was required to contract out much more labor than was planned. Contractual labor was required to finish much of the more complex aspects of the construction, such as plumbing, electricity and other carpentry work.

Another related reason for the increase in costs in the project over what was originally projected, was the cost of transporting goods and people to the islands and between project sites. On Abaco, it was originally proposed that most of the construction work would take place in the central part of the island, which would enable UMCOR to minimize transportation costs for volunteers and building materials. On Cat Island, it was envisioned that most of the work would be undertaken on the northern part of the island, for the same reason. However, the on-island housing committees on both islands, determined that there were beneficiaries throughout both islands that were in dire need of housing assistance. The distance between project sites and material storage sites in some cases was between 50-60 miles each way. Thus, much expense and effort was put towards the transportation of materials and volunteers between project sites.

Concerning major repairs, once the assessment of houses needing repairs was completed, it was determined that the necessary repairs were larger in scope than what had been originally envisioned. Instead of patching roofs, for example, there was a need for the complete reconstruction of roofs including framing and shingling.

In terms of donations to the project, it was planned that the Government of Bahamas would donate approximately \$10,000 worth of materials toward the reconstruction of the houses. In actuality, the amount of material donations toward phase 1 and 2 houses was dependent on the size of the houses (1, 2 or 3 bedroom houses) and only amounted to between \$3,500 and \$6,500. The amount of donation was increased for the 4 partially reconstructed phase 3 houses to approximately \$9,000.

Although it did take much time and effort on the logistical end, UMCOR was successful in ensuring project materials and equipment were procured and delivered to construction sites in a timely and accountable manner. UMCOR did not suffer the loss of materials through either theft or damage.

Despite these caveats from the original project plan, UMCOR was still able to reconstruct hurricane-damaged homes at a lower cost than were those being reconstructed by the Government of the Bahamas.

### III. PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED AND LESSONS LEARNED

There were few major problems encountered during the implementation of this project. One of the main challenges encountered was trying to minimize costs in an expensive operating context. Since most goods and materials are imported into the Bahamas, costs of most construction material were expensive. Alternatives for procuring in the United States were equally expensive when shipping costs to the islands were added to wholesale costs. In addition, since building sites were spread throughout the islands, it was difficult for UMCOR to minimize transportation costs for volunteers and materials, since fuel costs on-island are very expensive.

Another problem encountered was that the composition of the volunteer teams recruited were less qualified than what UMCOR had expected. Although much effort was put into ensuring that volunteer teams were composed of experienced construction workers, most often, UMCOR was only able to recruit teams with one or two leaders who had professional building experience. This meant that UMCOR did have to contract more of the technical construction work, such as framing, plumbing, carpentry, and electricity, out to local contractors. However, UMCOR and the Government of the Bahamas still recognize that the input of the volunteer teams was significant. It enabled construction to move along generally at a quicker pace than if we relied solely on contractors. In addition, it enabled UMCOR to complete the work at a lower cost than what it was costing the GOB to reconstruct relying solely on private contractors.

Another challenge that should be noted here in regards to volunteer teams, is the significant amount of time and effort it took to coordinate the arrival and work of those teams. UMCOR advertised for volunteer teams through its network in the United States. The interested teams then contacted UMCOR's staff in the Bahamas and presented them with information on the teams composition and experience. Their arrival was then coordinated based on matching the teams availability with on-going construction needs. On Abaco Island, the Government of the Bahamas donated lodging near the project sites. UMCOR utilized the house of the Prime Minister and homes belonging to the Ministry of Education for its teaching staff. On Cat Island, lodging was donated by the BCMC. However, on Cat, lodging was only available on the northern part of the



island, requiring UMCOR to transport volunteers on a daily basis to project sites in the southern part of the island. UMCOR also spent much effort into ensuring adequate supervision of the volunteer teams in order to maintain the quality of the reconstruction and repairs. The donated lodging was much appreciated and greatly contributed to minimizing volunteer costs.

As the least developed family island, and the island most effected by Hurricane Floyd, Cat Island proved to be a particularly challenging operating environment. The infrastructure of Cat Island is very basic, with no building material supplier, no banks, or other major stores for other commodities. All materials had to be shipped in from Nassau. This proved to be more time consuming and costly than was originally anticipated.

The main lesson learned was that due to the needed input of the two other major partner's in this project, it was imperative for flexibility to determine the proper course of action in implementing such a project. UMCOR was unable to make most program decisions independently of the other main partners, the Government of the Bahamas' Disaster Preparedness Committee, and the BCMC. Due to the other partners' local experience, UMCOR often deferred to them on issues relating to beneficiary selection and construction needs. UMCOR emphasized the need to take all partners' concerns and perspectives into the decision-making processes. UMCOR also learned that holding the needs of the beneficiaries as the guiding influence to make those decisions necessary for the project to prevail, that we were able to satisfy those differences between us, and be held to a higher standard.

#### IV. PROJECT MANAGEMENT ASPECTS

UMCOR/Bahamas management strategy worked well in administering this Housing Relief Project. The Project Manager, Procurement Assistant, and the two on-island coordinators were the overall directors of the daily operations, from the coordination of volunteer teams, the procurement of materials, and the monitoring of quality construction. By following the GOB disaster reconstruction codes, UMCOR was able to ensure that the type and quality of reconstruction followed the standards.

UMCOR believes that the establishment of the on-island beneficiary selection committees enabled local authorities and partners to take ownership for the project outputs, by enabling them to play a role in beneficiary selection.

Monitoring of the project was conducted by the Project Manager on a regular basis to ensure that construction was occurring in a timely manner and that the quality of construction was in line with housing codes.

As much reconstruction and repair work is still needed on these islands, UMCOR is encouraged that the BCMC is initiating a housing relief project that will continue to use local resources to meet the housing relief needs of communities on the outer islands. The program also allows an ongoing monitoring aspect to those individuals and families who have benefited from the UMCOR project.

## V. PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Although the Bahamas is not a typical developing country in which UMCOR has implemented other reconstruction programs, the operating environment nonetheless proved to be complex and challenging. The central feature of the project was the recruitment and deployment of volunteer teams and the coordination between project partners. The joint contributions of the Bahamian Government and their Disaster Preparedness Committee, the United States Government the BCMC, and the UMVIM teams, were appreciated by all, and form a fine example of the benefits of collaboration.

**VI. Financial Review for Period: October 1, 2000 - September 30, 2001**

**FINANCIAL REVIEW**  
(As of October 1, 2001)

<b>Program Component</b>	<b>Project Budget</b>	<b>Approximate Expenditure</b>	<b>Percent Expended</b>
Shelter Reconstruction & Repair - Materials and Labor	567,030.00	536,335.64	95%
Personnel Costs	174,010.00	204,364.67	118%
Operational Costs	72,400.00	69,016.78	96%
ICR @ 16.60%	40,285.00	40,285.00	100%
TOTAL Costs	850,000.00	850,002.09	100%

## **UMCOR Bahamas Reconstruction**

Household Beneficiaries that Received Reconstruction  
and Major Repairs Assistance  
By Island

#	Name of Beneficiary	Location of House	Size of House	Type of Work Done
1	William Stubbs	Orange Creek, Cat Island	1 Bedroom	Reconstruction
2	Ansel Stubbs	Orange Creek, Cat Island	1 Bedroom	Reconstruction
3	Debbie Newbold	Orange Creek, Cat Island	3 Bedroom	Reconstruction
4	Ivan Ramsey	The Cove, Cat Island	1 Bedroom	Reconstruction
5	Sheeba Mae Rolle	Bain's Town, Cat Island	3 Bedroom	Reconstruction
6	Leena Mae Wright	Orange Creek, Cat Island	3 Bedroom	Major Repairs
7	Eldora Stubbs	Orange Creek, Cat Island	1 Bedroom	Major Repairs
8	Madelyn Williams	The Bight, Cat Island	2 Bedroom	Major Repairs
9	Tawnique Clarke	Fire Road, Abaco Island	2 Bedroom	Reconstruction
10	Leonadell Rolle	Cooper's Town, Abaco Island	3 Bedroom	Reconstruction
11	Merle Williams	Dundas Town, Abaco Island	1 Bedroom	Reconstruction
12	Michelle Malone	March Harbor, Abaco Island	2 Bedroom	Reconstruction
13	Bradford Swain	Murphy Town, Abaco Island	1 Bedroom	Reconstruction
14	Mervin Rolle	Spring City, Abaco Island	1 Bedroom	Reconstruction
15	Floyd & Muriel Burrows	Sandy Point, Abaco Island	2 Bedroom	Reconstruction
16	Evelyn Burrows	Sandy Point, Abaco Island	2 Bedroom	Reconstruction
17	Hartman Lightbourne	Sandy Point, Abaco Island	1 Bedroom	Reconstruction
18	Martha Mills	Mount Hope, Abaco Island	3 Bedroom	Reconstruction
19	Estella Moncur	Crown Haven, Abaco Island	1 Bedroom	Reconstruction
20	Pauline Thompson	Fox Town, Abaco Island	1 Bedroom	Reconstruction
21	Evelyn Russell	Crown Haven, Abaco Island		Major Repairs
22	Marjorie Johnson	Murphy Town, Abaco Island		Major Repairs
23	Wilton Sawyor	Dundas Town, Abaco Island		Major Repairs
24	Simeon & Lottie Pinder	Sandy Point, Abaco Island		Major Repairs
25	William Cox	Sandy Point, Abaco Island		Major Repairs
26	George & Donna Bain	Sandy Point, Abaco Island		Major Repairs
27	Sandra Rolle	Cooper's Town, Abaco Island	2 Bedroom	Partial Reconstruction
28	Jon Nesbitt	Cooper's Town, Abaco Island	1 Bedroom	Partial Reconstruction
29	Candy Mae Rolle	Cooper's Town, Abaco Island	3 Bedroom	Partial Reconstruction
30	Keith Clark	Murphy Town, Abaco Island	3 Bedroom	Partial Reconstruction
31	Donald McIntosh	Fox Town, Abaco Island	1 Bedroom	Partial Reconstruction